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SUBJECT: MAYSAN ISCI HEAD REVEALS PRE-ELECTION OPTIMISM

Classified By: Acting Deputy Robert Ford. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) This is a Maysan PRT reporting cable.

12. (C) Summary: In a January 21 meeting with the PRT, ISCI Deputy Governor Abdul Hussein Abdul Radha expressed optimism over the provincial election process in and his party's chances in Maysan. Radha confidently predicted that the ruling Sadrists' failure to deliver significant progress, combined with ISCI's proven track record in other ISCI-controlled provinces, would sway Maysanis to vote ISCI. Absent any major voting violations, he predicted his party could win up to half of the 27 Provincial Council seats. Radha asserted campaign infractions were common, including vandalism, parties placing posters on government buildings, and bribery, but was confident that intimidation tactics and pre/post-election violence were unlikely. The Deputy Governor also expressed concern that an insufficient number of voting centers exist to adequately cover all the rural sub-districts in the province, which would pose difficulties for many villagers to get to the polls. Asked about the impact Tribal Support Councils (TSC) would have in Maysan, Radha responded sharply that TSCs will have no bearing on the elections. End Summary.

ISCI Outlook is Positive

13. (C) During a January 21 meeting with the PRT at FOB Garry Owen, ISCI-affiliated Deputy Governor Abdul Hussein Abdul Radha expressed optimism about ISCI's chances in the upcoming provincial elections in Maysan. (Note: The Deputy Governor and his fellow ISCI party members are running on the List of the Independent Martyr of al Mihrab (Prayer) and Force candidate list (290/C14). ISCI currently holds six of the 41 Maysan Provincial Council (PC) seats. End Note.) He explained that ISCI was popular in most of the province, except for the Majar al Kabir district in the center-south and some sections of Amarah still under heavy Sadrist sway. Radha predicted ISCI could win half of the 27 PC seats if there were no major voting violations. He said ISCI's chances were strong due to ISCI's proven track record in other ISCI-run provinces coupled with the groundswell of frustration Maysanis feel towards the ruling Sadrists for the provincial government's failure to promote economic development and shield Maysanis from violence.

ISCI Platform Promotes International Exchange

14. (C) Radha said ISCI candidates were campaigning on the platform of improving the Maysani standard of living through increased educational and international exchange opportunities. He cited one major difference between ISCI and other competing parties as ISCI's belief that progress can be achieved through interaction with outsiders. He said the other parties ardently disagreed, with their platform that Iraq would not make progress while the "occupiers" are here.

Campaign Infractions Are Common

¶5. (C) Radha reported he had heard of numerous campaign violations, including vandalism, parties placing posters on government buildings, and bribery. He said he had expressed his concerns to Maysan Governorate Elections Officer (GEO) Dr. Jaffar, in addition to warning the GEO that insufficient polling centers to cover all the sub districts in Maysan could negatively impact many villagers' ability to vote. He also accused former Prime Minister Dr. Ja'afari's political party, The National Reform Trend (153/562), of bribing Qparty, The National Reform Trend (153/562), of bribing Maysanis for their support at the polls, stating that he had not heard of vote-buying from any other parties.

TSCs Will Not Impact the Elections

¶6. (C) Team leader inquired whether Tribal Support Councils (TSC) would have any impact on the elections. Responding sharply, Radha stated that TSCs have not made a difference. "It is a negative thing," Radha said, claiming that Prime Minister Maliki had made a mistake in creating TSCs. According to Radha, TSCs hold little power and are not involved in government or with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). He explained that "educated" tribal members would not blindly follow their tribal leaders but would vote according to their consciences. He also noted that many tribal members were loyal to the clerics and predicted they would pick

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religious leaders over tribal leaders.

Comment

¶7. (C) During previous PRT engagements with Maysan political leaders, most have been somewhat taciturn in speculating about election prospects and politics in Maysan. Recent candid assessments from the Deputy Governor and other candidates (to be reported septel) open a window into the murky political landscape in this uniquely Sadrist-controlled province. Opposition confidence and the Sadrists' quiet concern about the possibility of a weakened bastion portend an interesting election in Maysan. End Comment.

CROCKER